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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4448
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000372

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B.WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: MDC FOCUSES ON OUTSTANDING ISSUES; DETAINEES
RELEASED

Classified By: CDA Katherine Dhanani for Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Following a May 6 MDC Standing Committee meeting, party Secretary General Tendai Biti held a press conference to announce that the MDC expected action in the next ten days on outstanding issues under the Global Political Agreement, including the appointments of the Reserve Bank (RBZ) Governor and the Attorney General. Separately, after Tsvangirai raised the issue with Mugabe, the detainees who were returned to jail on May 5 were released. It appears the MDC's patience is wearing thin but it is not yet clear what the party will do if its demands are not met. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The MDC's Roy Bennett briefed us on the MDC Standing Committee meeting held today. The Committee is comprised of the 12 highest MDC officials; 9 attended the meeting. Biti and Chamisa in particular pressured Tsvangirai to resolve outstanding issues. The Committee agreed that all outstanding issues should be resolved at a meeting of principals on May 11, which should be the last principals meeting on these issues. If all are not resolved, the MDC National Council, scheduled to meet on May 17, will consider next steps.

¶3. (C) Of note regarding outstanding issues, the Committee took the position that Attorney General Tomana, in addition to RBZ Governor Gono, should go. The MDC's position is that both were appointed in violation of the September 15 Inter-Party Agreement and that their positions should be filled by Mugabe and Tsvangirai acting together. As to Bennett, the MDC position is that since under Zimbabwean law he is innocent until proven guilty, Mugabe cannot use pending charges against him as an excuse not to swear him in. Tsvangirai instructed him to report to work as Deputy Minister of Agriculture next Monday.

¶4. (SBU) Subsequent to the Committee meeting, Biti in his capacity as MDC Secretary General held a press conference and summarized the decisions taken by the Committee. In addition to outstanding issues, he emphasized that Tsvangirai was due

respect as prime minister by the security forces -- a respect which has been pointedly lacking. He also decried a continuing media war by the government press, radio, and television that refuses to acknowledge the MDC as equal partners in government.

¶5. (SBU) Biti was directly asked if, in light of continuing problems, the new governmental arrangement had failed. He firmly rejected the premise of the question, and stated that on balance the forces of change and progress outweighed the negative. He acknowledged there were "land mines" that needed to be cleared.

¶6. (C) MDC sources told us that at a principals meeting yesterday that had already been scheduled, Tsvangirai raised the issue of the remand to custody of Jestina Mukoko and others. Mugabe summoned Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa and instructed him to facilitate their release. We understand that defense attorneys subsequently met with Qunderstand that defense attorneys subsequently met with Attorney General Tomana who promised they would be released today.

¶7. (SBU) We learned that, with the exception of the three at Avenues Clinic under police guard, all were released. The three are subject to a separate court process since they were already in custody when the others were remanded yesterday. They have bail hearings scheduled tomorrow.

COMMENT

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¶8. (C) Tsvangirai has preferred a low-key approach to resolving outstanding issues. Biti, Chamisa, and others, have become impatient and are forcing the issue by pressuring Tsvangirai, and going public and giving Mugabe a deadline. Since the MDC has resolved to stay in government, the unanswered question is what it will do if it does not receive satisfaction on the clearly-defined outstanding issues. END
COMMENT.

DHANANI